

IMAGINE

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We welcome correspondence from our readers. Send email to spc@iname.com or write us at Box 4280 Victoria, BC Canada V8X 3X8

BILL 115

After several months of so-called collective bargaining wherein the teachers unions were accused of walking away from negotiations – they were presented right from the beginning with a take-it-or-leave-it offer – the Ontario Liberal government enacted Bill 115 in the late summer. The Act suspended the teachers' rights to collective bargaining and the right to strike and eventually imposed contracts that froze wages for two years, cut sick days from 20 to 10 per year, and abolished the right to 'bank' sick days for future long term illness. To say that the government trampled on entrenched workers' rights and took away benefits that took decades to gain is a gross understatement. The union sector organized rallies and protests and the recent Liberal leadership convention was notable for the weekend long protest that went on outside its doors. However, Bill 115 got an easy passage through the Ontario legislature with the help of the Tories, making such egregious actions perfectly legal.

In today's society, the common belief is that we have a democracy in that there is universal suffrage for all citizens over the age of eighteen and every few years we get to participate in electing our local members of parliament and to elect one party from several to govern the country in our best interests. Socialists hold that this is really no choice at all because all the parties want to gain power to manage our current socio-economic system, capitalism. The chosen party is bound, we say, to run the government in the interests of those who own the means of producing and distributing the wealth created by the working class. By dint of their amassed wealth they are able to ensure that parliament continues the system that is so successful for them. Among the parties that have any chance of winning, their differences are miniscule and all must follow the same basic rules of the system and perform government's function, i.e. make sure the profit making system remains profitable and capital accumulation continues with as little interruption as possible. To accomplish this, governments must

ensure the protection of the country's resources, infrastructure, a plentiful and competent labour supply, etc. In addition, democracy is subverted by money. Generally, the party that can attract the most money has the best chance of winning, being thus enabled to build a larger and stronger team and pay for more propaganda. And who has more money and therefore influence than those who own the system? Furthermore, MPs, when elected, are subject to party discipline through its hierarchical structure and the use of party whips to tell them how to vote, what programs to support, or not support. Thus we have a system that looks democratic and may have the potential to be so, but in practice is manipulated and managed in the interests of the minority.

**WE ARE
ALL
AFFECTED**

Given the above, socialists were not surprised that it was the Liberal government that pushed through Bill 115, an attack on workers' rights any way you care to look at it. It was, however, a surprise to many, especially in the educational community, because this type of heavy-handed action is often reserved for Conservative parties pushing the neo-liberal agendas. This was especially the case as the teachers had enjoyed a comparatively cooperative relationship with the government for several years after the turmoil

and animosity of the previous Conservative government of Mike Harris, and current Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, whose wife is a teacher, likes to call himself, 'the education premier'. The fact that his government rescinded Bill 115 after the contracts had been imposed only points to the fact that governments will act the way they must and our rights under the capitalist system are tenuous at best and subject to the whims of governments and employers.

However, we are in tough economic times according to the cheerleaders of the capitalist system, the economists, unemployment is up, revenue is down, and budgets have to be balanced. The Liberals, then, are doing what any other party in power would have to do. Certainly we saw attacks on workers' rights

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(the 60-hour week) and social programs (welfare payments cut by one third) by the Harris government in the 1990s and before that, the NDP government of Bob Rae (now interim leader of the federal Liberal party, while Thomas Mulcair, a former Liberal, leads the NDP party!) was forced to make public sector workers take days off without pay (The infamous Rae Days) to help balance the budget in the early 1990s. The point is, Left Wing, Right Wing, Centre, Red, Blue, Yellow, or whatever colour you choose, they will all have to do the same thing in so-called tough economic times – make the working class pay the deficit by wage and benefit reductions, lay-offs, and cuts to social programs. There is, of course, never any suggestion that those who benefit most from the system, the millionaires, the billionaires, and their corporations should be forced to contribute. On the contrary, they continue to get ever-greater tax breaks and their share of the total social wealth continues to grow at the expense of the rest.

To socialists, this is how we expect it to be because that's exactly the way the capitalist system was designed to work, and it is obviously working very well. So while Bill 115 is an outrageous attack on workers' rights, and will, no doubt, be followed by similar measures by this and other governments, and we must fight against it, there is only one real way to deal with this age-old problem – support The Socialist Party of Canada and/or its companion parties around the world. It is the only party that stands for something entirely different. For over one hundred years our platform has been the replacement of the capitalists system with the establishment of a socialist society based on the common ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth and free access for all humans to all goods and services produced by society. Only when that is achieved will struggles against governments who try to take away our rights, and against big capital itself and its institutions, cease to be an issue.

THE WORKING DAY

No matter what the economic system, at least one part of the working day must be for reproducing the labourer in order that he/she will be able to continue to work the next day. In societies based on private property and where a monopoly of the means of production exists, including our present capitalist system, a second part of the day must be designated to produce a surplus above the reproduction of the labourer to look after the non producers, the owners. This division of the working day makes it a constant source of class struggle. The labourer wants to conserve his commodity, the ability to work, and so seeks a shorter day, while the owners, or capitalists, seek to lengthen and intensify the time at work so that more time is given to producing the surplus-value that they appropriate. Thus there exists a contradiction, a source of conflict, between worker and owner. The capitalist is forced to strive for a longer day, as Marx writes, "...it is evident that this (i.e. driving the worker to his physical limits) does not depend on the will, either good or bad, of the individual capitalist. Under free competition, the immanent laws of capitalist production confront the individual capitalist as a coercive force external to him." (Capital, Volume 1, p.381, Penguin Classics edition). In other words, in this system, the capitalist is forced to do whatever it takes to extract more profit than his competitors, or risk going bankrupt.

The minimum length of the working day is the simple reproduction of the worker, which is not possible in the capitalist mode of production. The parasites must be clothed and fed in the finest manner. The maximum limit is set by the worker's physical limits and by the general level of civilization prevalent at a particular time and place. For example, today we expect more time away from work to pursue our interests than we received in the nineteenth century. We expect better benefits and enjoy a higher quality lifestyle than most of the workers in the so-called Third World. The fact that our current wages and benefits are under attack elucidates the fact that the basic laws of capitalism haven't changed at all and the inherent contradictions and conflicts continue. The length of the working day, working year (how many holidays?), working life (when do we retire?) is, and will continue to be, an ongoing struggle. Like all human rights abuses, they are a consequence of a system based on private ownership and inequality and will only be settled by ending such a system and replacing it with socialism, i.e. common ownership and free access etc. Organizations such as Amnesty International make the mistake of expecting to make capitalism more humane and not recognizing that this system is based on inequality.

In Feudal times there was no hard and fast rule for the length of the working day. The peasant was typically expected to work for three days on his own plot of land to reproduce himself and his family and three days on the lord's land to provide for him, his family and his gang of thugs, known in fantasy literature as 'knights in shining armour'. Although it is probable that the lord's supervisors demanded a hard day's work on the manorial lands, the peasant day, according to David Harvey (in "A Companion to Marx's Capital") was often as little as four hours. After all, once you have planted, watered and weeded your plot, what else is there to do until harvest time? Much of the rest of the day was given over to social and other activities such as a family outing on the common lands to collect firewood, nuts, mushrooms, berries, etc., presumably in a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere.



With the advent of the capitalist mode of production, the peasants' loss of land, and the closure of the common land, the peasant had no option but to migrate to the towns to find survival in the incipient factory system. The workers were now subjected to strict time and work discipline. The factory might open at 6am and close at 8pm and the worker was expected to be there between those times and be continually at his work-bench. There were no afternoons to wander through the woods and fields. Worker opposition to this discipline was at times fierce but the arrival of machines and large-scale production made the worker simply an unskilled operator who could be replaced, and often was, by women and children, forcing compliance to the factory conditions. The length of the factory day was as much as sixteen hours, so that if the worker's reproduction took the equivalent of four hours, a working day length of sixteen hours gave the capitalist a surplus-value equivalent to twelve hours. Had the day been only twelve hours, then the surplus-value equivalent would only have been eight hours.

It was therefore in the capitalists' interests to work for a longer day. That they did so is a corroboration of the fact that value is necessary labour time.

This being the case, why, in a state run by capitalists and landlords, did we get the factory acts limiting the length of the working day? The government, the executive arm of the ruling class, realized that the country's social labour-power was a natural resource, like land, and needed to be protected. Individual, tunnel-visioned capitalists could only see their own domain and were likely to run their labour resource down to an incompetent physical condition to maximize their surplus-value. This, over time, would degenerate the system for all. In addition, the ease with which the Prussian army defeated the French in the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War was attributed to the superior physical condition of the German soldiers, teaching the lesson that if you want to protect your capitalist class's property and interests, you had better have your workers ship-shape and fighting fit for king and country.

Even so, the capitalists put up strong resistance to the series of acts limiting the working day and forcing safety measures in the workplace. On the one hand, they nibbled away at break times, demanded workers be at the machines for starting time, maintenance was to be done in the worker's time, they altered the clocks, they strengthened discipline and they increased the intensity of work. To them, as Marx pointed out, 'moments are the elements of profit'. Not a moment was to be wasted. These ideas later led to the new science of time and motion studies where lab technicians in white coats timed the worker's every move with a stop watch with a view to speeding up production. On the other hand, the employers formed associations to fight the legislation and hired lawyers to fight every aspect of the acts in every court in the country, chipping away pieces here and there until the laws were virtually unenforceable. This was particularly marked after the passing of the Ten-Hour Bill of 1848, passed with the help of the landed aristocracy, the Tories, gaining revenge for the capitalists' passing of the 1832 Reform Bill that severely limited the aristocratic powers in parliament, and the passing of the Corn Laws of the 1840s.

The struggle over the length of the working day spawned worker opposition and working class movements to fight back and was a catalyst of the Chartist Movement. Combined with bourgeois reformism and morality and middle class support, there was a slackening of the very worst effects of the exploitation of the factory system after 1850. A shortening of the day did not have a marked effect on profits and some capitalists came to recognize the obvious, a healthy, efficient, well-rested work force would out-perform a tired less efficient one, even on a longer day. Thus the worst of the fifty-year struggle over the length of the working day abated, at least temporarily, and ended with something that benefited the capitalist class as well – same production, less wages, happier work force.

This, of course, was not the end of the struggle that has continued to the present day and will continue until the capitalist mode of production is replaced with socialist production, i.e. production for use, not profit. In the 1980s, the Reagan-Thatcher neo-liberal counter-revolution focused on flexible hours and a flexible work force. The deregulation and vulnerable work force it seeks, and has had some considerable success in getting is "...a recrudescence of the sorts of conditions that the factory inspectors so graphically described in Marx's time... Sad to report, Marx's analysis is all too relevant to our contemporary condition" (David Harvey). The Gap Clothing in Central America, Nike plants in Indonesia, Levi Strauss in SE Asia, the Kathy Lee-Gifford clothing at Wal Mart and produced by children in sweat shops in Honduras or immigrants in New York, are all modern day examples of attempts to raise the exploitation level of workers without regard to their health or safety. Many working conditions today in those places and many others could easily be included in Marx's chapter on the working day, written one hundred and fifty years ago. More recently we have had former Ontario Premier Mike Harris's introduction of the sixty-hour work-week without overtime pay, and the increase of the pension age to 67 by the current federal government.

Thus, just as the antagonisms between worker and owner will continue as long as the system lasts, so, too, will the struggle over the length of the working day. Much of the idea of modern communications technology in the work place is to keep track of workers and their progress and to lengthen the working day and week. The class struggle is inevitable and, for the workers' part, must be waged to mitigate the worst aspects of the capitalist system, but more is needed. To only fight back without changing the root causes of the antagonisms is to consign the producing class, the workers, to endure those conditions forever. If we are to defeat capitalism, we must beat them at their own game. We must act politically through the Socialist Parties dedicated to capturing parliament to enact laws to end the private ownership of the world and its resources by a tiny minority and end the struggle once and for all.

"It is self-evident that the worker is nothing other than labour-power for the duration of his whole life, and that therefore all his disposable time is by nature and by right labour-time, to be devoted to the self-valorization of capital [i.e., the production of surplus-value]. Time for education, for intellectual development, for the fulfillment of social functions, for social intercourse, for the free play of vital forces of his body and mind, even the rest time on Sunday...what foolishness! But in its blind and measureless drive, its insatiable appetite for surplus-labour, capital oversteps not only the moral but even the merely physical limits of the working day. It usurps the time for growth, development and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight. It haggles over the meal times, where possible incorporating them into the production process itself... Capital reduces the sound sleep needed for...restoration, renewal and refreshment...[It] asks no question about the length of life of labour-power. What interests it is purely and simply the maximum of labour-power that can be set in motion in a working day. It obtains this objective by shortening the life of labour-power, in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility." (Capital, volume I, pages 375/6)

OBSCENE AND HEARD



Capitalism is a crazy system whichever way you look at it, but sometimes it even outdoes itself for sheer stupidity as, for example,

A reporter on CNN was talking about autism and its possible causes, one of which was poisoned food, as in the additives put in by manufacturers for longer shelf life, etc. Her recommendation was to buy organic foods. She never mentioned that maybe we should look at what is being put in our stores for human consumption!

Ski helmets are being sold in Canada that do not meet the national CSA standards. Manufacturers comment – to meet the standards would mean a helmet that was so ugly it wouldn't be marketable.

On the youth unemployment situation – Ashlee McMillan, 24, now a service representative at the Bank of Montreal, gripes that unpaid internships are the only way to get experience. “When did it become OK for people to work and not get paid? Isn't that what slaves do? I was working (as an unpaid intern) in The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, that was the ironic part of it all.” (Toronto Star, December 9)

The federal government is shedding thousands of jobs as part of the austerity measures wherein the working class pays for the economic downturn, as usual. They fired some earlier than announced, but were doing it as a 'favour', securing their future and letting them get on with life!

In the same vein, giant department store, Zellers, is closing down and selling their leases to American retailer, Target, for more than one billion dollars. Sign in our local Zellers restaurant said, “Come join our Zellers restaurant staff as they prepare to leave on their next great life adventure.” That would be called joining the unemployment line to you and me!

We all know conditions for the working class in many countries has worsened over the last few years but they have reached new heights in Spain. Things are so bad there that payments on grave sites are defaulting and consequently the dead are being evicted and moved to cheaper or unmarked sites. Owners of the graves become aware their relatives are being moved when eviction notices appear on the graves. A geriatric nurse commented, “I'm upset about death, I'm upset about life!” (New York Times, 16/12/12).

A socialist understanding aside, it's hard for anyone outside the USA to understand the gun mentality there, especially when we learn that as Obama pushes for some form of gun control, however weak that may be, firearm enthusiasts, led by the political and organizational arm of the gun manufacturers, the National Rifle Association, registered a nation-wide Gun Appreciation Day. They held rallies in forty-nine states and many had gun shows as part of the celebration. Unfortunately, five people were wounded at various locations by the accidental discharge of firearms. Maybe guns are dangerous after all, even in the hands of 'Good Guys'. (A reference to the NRA reply to the mass shooting of first graders and teachers in Newtown in December that said, “The only thing to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” (Toronto Star, January 20 2013).

On the same topic, the American Firearms industry supports a magazine for children entitled “Junior Shooters”. A recent issue featured a fifteen-year-old girl on the cover clutching a semi-automatic rifle. The publication encouraged youngsters to share information with parents, “Who knows” it continued, “maybe you'll find a bushmaster AR-15 under your tree some frosty Christmas morning!”

The World Health Organization reported that two million people perish every year from the harmful effects of indoor smoke from burning coal, wood, or dung inside the home. (Popular Science, February, 2013)

Rick Hind, legislative director of Greenpeace, says there are 60,000 to 70,000 chemicals in commercial use and only about two hundred have been thoroughly assessed by the Environmental Protection Agency. He says, “A very small percentage of the chemicals we are swimming in – in our air, our water, our food – have been tested for all the things that they can do to us.”

Tim Cook, Steve Jobs successor, gets \$45,673 per hour. The average pay of an Apple Store employee is \$12 per hour. The average pay of a worker in Taiwan who actually makes the iPods, iPads, iPhones is \$2.50 per hour.

“For many of the richest people in Hong Kong, one of Asia's wealthiest cities, home is a mansion with an expansive view. For some of the poorest, Like Leung Cho-yin, home is a metal cage.” (Toronto Star, 23/Feb/2013). Leung, a former butcher, rents a wire cage measuring 1.5 metres, resembling a rabbit hutch, one of about a dozen stacked on top of each other in an apartment, for \$CA165 a month. Some 100,000 inhabitants of the former British colony live in 'inadequate' housing. These include apartments subdivided into tiny cubicles filled with coffin-size wood and metal sleeping compartments and rooftop shacks. This is how our current system looks after people!

GLOBAL WARMING - YOU MEAN IT EXISTS?

A recent article in the Toronto Star stressed the amazing contradiction between the alarming rate of climate change and those who deny it is happening. The Third US National Climate Assessment Draft describes the rising temperatures, melting glaciers, changing coastlines, rising seas, extreme storms, and frequent heat waves.

John Smol, the chairman of Canada Research and Environmental Change, says, "As fresh data pours in, the outlook gets scarier. It seems we have been underestimating the kind and amount of problems we will face." It is surprising to us that some who take this matter very seriously do not grasp the long-term effects that are beginning to show now. By the melting of the ice caps and the flowing of the newly-melted water into the oceans, its currents are being, and will continue to be, diverted, changing the world's climate. Already, the Gulf Stream is thirty per cent diverted. That means, short of reversing this trend, Britain and Scandinavian countries will be ice-bound in the winter – a case of global warming causing climate cooling. There is an ice berg off the coast of Antarctica that is the size of France – imagine what will happen when that melts.

But no matter how the information pours in, how dire the warnings are, they scarcely warrant a shrug of the shoulders from the climate change deniers. The problem for socialists is that, like many problems we face, those who have the knowledge and want to do something about it, expect to effect meaningful change within our present economic system. Obviously, to date, that just is not happening as conference after conference result in disagreement among nations or weak measures reliant on voluntary actions. The truth is that the capitalist system of production, and a world divided into two hundred competing countries, is not equipped to tackle the problem. Real action costs money, big money, and as the workers wages only cover what they need to survive, then that money must come from profits. No chance! We are going to face the need for some massive reorganization of how we do business and where we live and that can only be done successfully when the whole world is on the same page. That will only come in a one world, cooperative system, i.e. socialism.

The deniers themselves may scoff at global warming officially, but they must be aware of its present and future effects and that it is happening faster than was initially predicted. They are the cheerleaders of the capitalist class who get well paid to invent propaganda to keep the majority confused and action to a minimum. Whether it be the sale of fossil fuels and the energy to needed to run their manufacturing plants, it still means profits for the capitalist class, so its business as usual – *après moi, le deluge!*

Another very significant factor in turning a blind eye to the effects of global warming is the fact that it gives an opportunity to exploit the Arctic as the ice cap melts allowing new commercial activities. Already, the Russian government is planning to build ten new ports for shipping through the Arctic. They intend to relax transit fees to encourage foreign shipping and investment. Russian and other Western countries are already moving to develop three new Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) production plants on Russia's northern coast. Russian capitalists want to sell LNGs to China and Japan and they view LNG exporters in Australia, Qatar, and the US as commercial rivals. By



establishing a sea route through the Arctic, Russian ships will cut three thousand nautical miles off the alternate Suez Canal route.

"The Russian state is very keen to develop the Arctic because they see it as a key to maintaining exports, which is in turn key to sustaining fiscal revenues and to keep its geopolitical standing in the world," said Charles Emmerson, senior research fellow at International Think Tank Chatham House. "For Russia, it is difficult to exaggerate the potential geopolitical and geoeconomic importance of the Arctic." (Toronto Star, 26/Jan/2013) In November, the Russian export company, Gazprom, made the first ever delivery of LNG through the northern sea route. It shipped LNG from Norway's Snoehvit plant to Japan. Soon, foreign governments and companies will be involved, particularly when one considers 25% of the world's untapped hydro-carbons exist under the Arctic ice.

In "Under The Sea" (Popular Science, March 2013) author Damon Tabor writes that companies are racing to get into drilling in the Arctic Ocean and Royal Dutch Shell has already spent \$4.5 billion drilling off the northern coast of Alaska. ConocoPhillips (in the Chukchi Sea) and Exxon, partnered with a Russian company (off Siberia) hope to start drilling by next year. The Arctic, Tabor tells us, contains an estimated ninety billion barrels of recoverable oil and 1,670 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Because of the special challenges of drilling in the Arctic, companies are also racing to develop ocean floor drilling technology, a huge undertaking that will, hopefully, eliminate the problems of costly and vulnerable surface rigs. What happens if things go wrong in that hostile environment? Tabor writes, "After the Deepwater Horizon blowout, clean-up crews in the Gulf of Mexico recovered only roughly twenty-five per cent of spilled oil. In a worst-case scenario, one of the last remaining options would be a method still unproven in icy conditions, what the industry calls ISB, or *in situ* burning: tossing a match and watching as the Arctic goes up in flames."

When one considers that the pressure of commercial rivalries is the number one cause of conflict and war, it is safe to assume that there will be military confrontations one day over the Arctic's resources. (see "The Arctic Ocean – The Final Frontier", Imagine, Fall 2010) Two things may prevent that scenario – global warming may become a serious disruption of the economic system, a good possibility if things are allowed to go as they are, or common sense may prevail and a socialist society is established, one based on common ownership and democratic control of production for needs. Such a society would have to clear up the environmental mess left by capitalism and produce in a sustainable and responsible way. So, though the time to do something about global warming is later than most people think, nevertheless, it's not too late.



WAR

IS IT A HUMAN CONDITION?

We can all agree that war is the most destructive activity of mankind – the loss of life of horrific proportions as war became more and more mechanized; the injured and maimed, many damaged for life; the destruction of society's infrastructure. But is it in human nature to kill fellow human beings?

Right from the beginning, our early hominid ancestors that left the safety of the trees were forced to cooperate in order to survive in a hostile environment where the predators were bigger, faster, stronger, and better equipped to kill. Those cooperative skills and emerging communication skills, coupled with larger and larger brain sizes allowed the continued evolution to modern-day humans. Many species of these early proto humans died out, not due to extermination by warfare, but rather from changing environmental cycles, loss of habitat etc. While there may be some evidence that homo sapiens and Neanderthals had some violent clashes, the evidence is not at all conclusive and their disappearance may well have been due to competition for food producing habitats.

Real, organized, planned warfare for resources and slaves appears to have developed after the first agrarian revolution of some ten thousand years ago when hunters and gatherers settled into sedentary agricultural lifestyles. The development of the ideas of private property, surplus product, and elite groups that had the right to control both, paved the way for wars over acquiring slaves to expand that surplus. From then on, it was a matter of larger empires, better machinery, and the application of science on an ever-expanding scale stretching to today's world of armed camps that soak up a considerable amount of social wealth and with the capability to destroy the earth many times over.

We are conditioned to war, desensitized to it with constant up-to-the-minute pictures and reports of conflicts from all over the world, and propagandized from birth to accept war and killing as a necessary evil to protect our selves, our country, and our way of life. Socialists, of course, know that this is hogwash and that war is a natural outcome of the competitive system that is capitalism. Get rid of capitalism and substitute a cooperative system, socialism, and you'll get rid of war.

The magazine, "Popular Science" (March 2013) contained an article titled "Mental Combat" by Matthieu Aikins, that sheds some light on the effects of war on human beings showing that war is not a natural activity. Aikins writes, "I had embedded with Bulldog Company to understand first-hand the conditions that forward-deployed infantry routinely experience during the course of combat – conditions that are causing a mental health crisis in the military. Suicides among service members have outpaced combat deaths. In other words, the young men around me in the Chinook were more likely to die by their own hand than by the Taliban's." He goes on to say, "The problem is, becoming good at war often involves becoming bad at peace. In every 20th

century conflict the US has fought, more American soldiers have been psychiatric casualties than have been killed in combat." He informs us that since 2001, the Department of Veterans' Affairs has diagnosed more than 200,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with post-traumatic stress disorder. (PTSD)

It was during WWI that soldiers were first diagnosed with PTSD, then called 'shell shock' with the application of the marvels churned out by the military-industrial complex. War and killing, it seems, is not such a natural activity of mankind at all. On this point, Aikins writes, "Soldiers throughout history have proved naturally averse to killing their enemies. During World War II, an army researcher named Col. S.L.A. Marshall interviewed a very large set of infantrymen immediately after intense combat and found that eighty to eighty-five per cent, when faced with an enemy target, didn't fire their rifles." The author also tells us that other researchers have discovered that findings at battlefields such as Gettysburg in the American Civil War showed that ninety per cent of the 27,574 abandoned muskets recovered after the battle were still loaded.

More proof of the reluctance to kill was the reaction to all this of the military authorities around the world to that type of evidence. Bull's-eye targets were replaced with human like silhouettes and dummies for bayoneting. Basic army training became rigorous and stressful to break down any sympathies a recruit may have for other human beings with abusive drill instructors, hand-to-hand combat to brutalize the soldier, to develop group loyalty, and make them more efficient and comfortable in killing during combat. Unfortunately, on return to civilian life, many are unable to switch back to normal peacetime life and many social problems result. A study by the National Institute of Mental Health found that patients with PTSD had fewer of a certain type of receptor for the neurotransmitter, serotonin and another study found that, after a shooting on their college campus, women with a serotonin-transporter gene variant linked to increased anxiety were more likely to develop PTSD. "Presumably," writes Aikin "the Army could use this knowledge to predict which soldiers will be better suited to combat". In 2011, the Pentagon awarded \$11 million to study whether the drug D-Cycloserine could help reduce fear associated with traumatic memories. Others are against developing a 'killing drug' because it could result in an army of socio-paths.

Obviously, the lengths that the authorities have to go to in order to get soldiers to kill, and there are lots more – execution for failure to obey, fire weapons, etc for example, point to the fact that killing other human beings is not a natural activity for the normal person. Even with the massive and constant barrage of governmental and media propaganda – the stretch of highway 401 near me has been renamed the 'Highway of Heroes' because of the constant parade of convoys for each dead body from Afghanistan en route to Toronto for the autopsy, and overpasses crowded by citizens waving the flag - even after all this, the most common New Year's wish is for world peace and an end to war. Men and women will forever have to be programmed to go to war until we put an end to its cause, the capitalist mode of production.



What the Frack!

A recent TV documentary, “Shattered Ground”, and a new movie, “Promised Land”, both focus on fracking and why we should be concerned. Fracking involves injecting millions of litres of water and thousands of litres of chemicals underground, at a very high pressure, to create fractures in shale rock formations to extract previously inaccessible gas and oil.

Lief Kaldor, the documentary filmmaker went to the areas where fracking is being carried out; Colorado, Texas, British Columbia, and Alberta. Kaldor first visited Dish, Texas, where fracking began in 2005. Calvin Tillman, the town’s former mayor, told him there was such an odour from the fracking compressing stations that the town paid for an air quality study. It was discovered the air contained carbon disulphide, a neurotoxin that caused irreversible brain damage. In Erie, Colorado, children suddenly had the same kind of food allergies and intestinal problems that caused parents to protest drilling near schools and residential areas. A study conducted by the Colorado School of Public Health found concentrations of chemicals known to cause cancer and neurological damage within a kilometer of shale gas wells. In “The Promised Land”, cattle died after eating the grass near the drilling sites.

In Canada, there are none close to habitation but the problems are getting and paying for the water they need. An average well takes four to eight million gallons to drill and frack. There can be up to twenty wells on a single pad that is spread over an acre. For multi-well operations in northeast British Columbia, millions of gallons are being pumped from Elk Lake, outside Victoria. One operation in BC needed so much water that they built a pipeline from the province’s biggest fresh water reserve. Ben Parfitt of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said, “The water used is fresh water that becomes toxic and cannot be returned to the normal water cycle.

Kaldorf was particularly concerned by the drought in the US last year, its worst in a decade. “Not knowing where we will be with the water situation in ten years and to waste water like this...it’s very troubling.” In “The Promised Land”, the spokesman for a company drilling the shale said, “The gas is a much cheaper fuel than oil and coal, we are doing everyone a favour.” Perhaps not for those in the direct line of fire for the side effects. Capitalists are all heart!

Once again we have a typical capitalist situation – to solve one problem means dumping other problems on millions of other people and millions will be affected if fracking stations open up all over the world, and there are vast shale areas to tap. As always there is no solution within capitalism because of the competitive nature of the system, the anarchy of production where there is no overall social control, and profit is the only determiner of what will be produced and how. Capital decides, not the people.

In a socialist society, the problems of producing energy cleanly and safely would still exist but the decisions would be made in the best interests of all and avoid harm, at all costs to humans and the environment. Since money, and therefore profit, would not exist, there would be no headlong rush to grab and maximize profits at any cost.



Fraud or Folly

On January 31st Canada's federal Human Resources Minister, Diane Finley, stressed the need to identify fraudsters who are cheating the Employment Insurance system out of millions of dollars.

While denying the federal investigators are given quotas for discovering illegal claims, Ms. Finley said the government is determined to "root out" fraud in E.I. claims. Last year, the government's clampdown netted \$530 million. 'Even with that the fund still lost hundreds of millions of dollars more due to fraud' the Minister said. Commenting that there are still hundreds of millions of dollars of potential fraud out there, Ms. Finley made the brilliant comment that Ottawa, "sets objectives to keep payments to the jobless as low as possible." No kidding! We didn't think they were nice guys who wanted to see the unemployed live a life of luxury! But, she is not finished yet, "The key is to root out the fraud that's within the system so that E.I. remains 'affordable' to those who play by the rules."



By rules she means the reforms introduced last year after overhauling the system, that were meant to toughen requirements for E.I. recipients to hold on to their benefits. These include compelling the unemployed to take jobs that are below their skill level or pay a lower wage than one can live on. This, remember, comes after Liberal finance minister, Paul Martin, amended the rules so severely in the 1990s that only one third of the unemployed actually qualified for benefits!

The reaction from the opposition was fast and furious; according to the NDP's Human Resources critic, Chris Charlton, "It's completely outrageous, she's characterizing people on E.I. as being criminals. Remember that these are benefits that workers and employers have paid for, not the government. Now, instead of making a positive announcement about wanting to help people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, she's essentially suggesting that the system is fraught with fraudsters."

Furthermore, The NDP cited a report that said E.I. inspectors had been ordered to weed out \$40,000 a month in fraudulent claims by would-be beneficiaries. Ms. Finley hit back by saying her critics, who were asking about the quota were, "...defending fraudsters and protecting bad guys." Here we have a typical example of upholders of capitalism, Left and Right wings, at each other's throats over ways of administering a flawed economic system.

As socialists, we naturally feel compassion for the unemployed but, at the same time, realize that their problems cannot be solved within capitalism, regardless of anything Ms. Finley or her critics do. Employment Insurance fraud, whether it exists or not, and to whatever extent it does, is not the moot point. But fraud is. Is it not fraud when workers are told to go to war to protect their right to free speech, to democracy, etc. when what they really mean is, "You should fight so the capitalist class has access to markets and raw materials because they need them to maintain profits?"

Is it not fraud when workers are told to work hard for the good of the country instead of 'work hard to increase productivity and profits'? When the value you create in one hour will pay your wage for that day and the rest of the day you work to produce the profit for the boss with your unpaid labour?

Is it not fraud when the working class is told that, 'capitalism is the best of all economic systems? For who? Why do we have the vast majority dependent on the whims of capital for gaining their subsistence of life?

Is it not fraud when they are told that the collapse of the Soviet Union proves communism cannot work? What passed for 'socialism' there was simply a different form of capitalism; capitalism run by the state.

Is it not fraud when they are told the government and the monarchy have their best interests at heart, when they exist to maintain a system that condemns the majority to a state of insecure dependence for their necessities of life?

It may well be that some who cannot pay the mortgage, feed and clothe the kids and make the car payments (and a car is a necessity) on E.I., practice fraud, but those who do are mere amateurs at the game compared to the fraud of the capitalist class and their underlings.

In a socialist society there will be no employment, never mind unemployment in the sense that we think of it today. When the means of production is capable of producing abundance, as it is today, and all can partake freely, then all will be able to seek useful work for the community according to their individual talents and inclinations. In such a world there would be no poverty, hence no hunger, no homelessness, and no fear of the future. There is certainly a great deal of fraud in today's world but to wish for the continuation of capitalism is sheer folly.

The Bangladesh Garment Factory Collapse

A furor has erupted world wide in the aftermath of the building collapse in Bangladesh that killed hundreds of garment workers. Cracks had been discovered in the structure a day earlier and police and industry leaders asked the factory bosses to stop work and await inspection. Some complied but the garment workers were ordered back to the top floors of the eight storey building with disastrous results. Information Minister Hasanul Haque told journalists, 'I wouldn't call it an accident, I would say it's murder' (Toronto Star, 27/04/13). Socialists would comment that if you looked at the daily number of worker deaths on the job, murder is a natural consequence of our competitive economic system.

The outrage has quite rightly been turned on the global clothing corporations that were involved with this particular factory – Joe Fresh, J.C. Penney, Cato Fashions, British retailer, Primark, and others. They are all scrambling to undo the damage done to their brands. In Canada, for example, Loblaw's, a giant grocery outfit that sells Joe Fresh apparel, has promised compensation for the families who lost members in the collapse. Many companies have scrambled meetings together to propose solutions and find exit strategies for the mess they find themselves in. Is this genuine concern or are they simply looking to minimize damage to the bottom line? The facts speak for themselves. There are thousands of similar factories in Bangladesh where safety and working conditions and pay are unbelievably appalling. Pretty well all the major clothing brands of the world can be found in one factory or another here. Regular horrendous fires with little chance of escape and survival, locked doors, non-existent fire-fighting procedures, and physical threats to stay at machines while fires rage compound the problem. Conditions are so low, so bad, that China is outsourcing some of its work to Bangladesh where conditions and pay are even lower than theirs!

There have been many warnings that work in such conditions threatens life and limb of the workers. Obviously, none of the previous tragedies has wrought any meaningful change. The government is afraid to pass any enforceable legislation, or allow unions and collective bargaining for worker protection as they well know that it would drive away business to somewhere with lower standards, and clothing manufacture represents eighty per cent of the country's exports. The boards of all the clothing manufacturers using Bangladeshi factories have made a conscious and calculated decision to move their production there precisely because conditions are so bad and costs so low, looking for a competitive edge and higher profits. While they deal with 'middle' men who dole out the work to the factories so they can claim they have no direct contact with the factories and can then deny any knowledge of conditions, they are fully aware of what's going on. That's the sole reason they are there and not producing in their own countries. How very patriotic of

them! If workers in North America and Europe would accept the same conditions they would move back in a heartbeat.

The thing is that if you asked any of those executives making such decisions whether they thought working fourteen hours a day for six and seven days a week and being rewarded with a few dollars, certain abject poverty, malnutrition, and shortened lives was a fair way to do business, I'm sure almost all would answer 'it's not what I would want my mother, sister, wife, to be doing'. So why do they do it and why will they keep on doing it?

The answer lies in the capitalist mode of production. It is a system based on squeezing surplus value from the workers, i.e. the difference between the worker's wage and the value he/she produces. It is a highly competitive system – higher profits attract more

"Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit. Just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profit capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent will ensure eagerness; 50 per cent, positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring profit, it will freely encourage both. Smuggling and the slave trade have amply proved all that is here stated."

Karl Marx, "Capital" volume 1, p834

investment for growth and absorbing competitors. Furthermore, it is the fiduciary duty of those running corporations to act in the investors' interests, i.e. to realize the best return on investment. In other words, what is just or humane, what individuals think or want means nothing. No one can give up the chance of extra profit no matter what has to be done. Cynical? This tragedy and thousands more around the world everyday from gold mines in Africa to coal mines in China to factories in "free" production zones prove the point. Marx proved the point in the well-documented factories of nineteenth century England, and conditions in the above-mentioned places would fit right in with his descriptions proving the system doesn't change it simply finds the

lowest conditions like water runs downhill.

The coercive laws of competition drive the decisions and you can rationalize this system all you want but tragic examples such as the latest one in Bangladesh are not accidents, they are the natural consequences of capitalism. That's why, after all the hand-wringing, after all the meetings, after all the promises, nothing meaningful can or will change and, unless we, the working class, the vast majority, make the conscious effort to get rid of this system, the next tragedy is waiting to happen to our fellow workers.



NEVER GET OLD

The jazz musician, Eubie Blake, who lived to be over one hundred, was once asked by David Frost if he had a message for the youth of the world. His reply was, “Never get old.” Under capitalism, Blake may have a point.

Our friends at The Toronto Star are, as always, big on exposure of social ills, but small in their analysis. On February 9th, in an article titled, “Keeping Them Safe From Each Other”, the Star, inspired by a recent W5 television program, focused on a little-known topic – resident on resident abuse in our nursing homes.

Most of the article was about an incident that occurred at the Lakeside Long-Term Care Home of Toronto. On February 18th, 2012, sixty-eight-year old Frank Piccolo, who suffered from Parkinson’s disease and dementia, was attacked by a woman whose room was across the hall from his. An employee of the home found Mr. Piccolo in his room covered in blood and suffering from trauma to the head and face. They found another resident standing nearby with blood on her face, hands, and clothing. The woman had entered Mr. Piccolo’s room earlier that day and yelled and scratched his arm and shoulder.

Mr. Piccolo was treated in hospital and then moved back to his room in the home, and his attacker moved back into hers. Three months later he died from pneumonia. His family believes that he just gave up. After the attack the Toronto police were called to investigate and recommended that the attacker be kept under supervision and that Mr. Piccolo be protected. Police superintendent, Mario Di Tommaso, said the suspect was not mentally fit to stand trial and that it was the responsibility of the home to provide a safe environment. He further added that the protection of residents in long-term care homes was that of the Ministry of Health.

Piccolo’s wife called the Ministry of Health to demand an investigation and sent photographs of her husband after the attack. The Ministry investigated, concluded the Lakeside Home was responsible, and by failing to protect Piccolo had violated the Ontario Long-Term Care Act. The report also listed seven incidents where the woman, who had been admitted the month prior to the attack, had been ‘physically and verbally aggressive to staff and other residents.’ To put it bluntly, it was a massive case of neglect by the staff after being aware of the problem.

The Star reported that, “Following a 2012 W5 investigation into abuse in long-term care facilities in Ontario, the program received many emails and phone calls from across Canada. Discovering that there were no national statistics for resident-on-resident altercations, W5 decided to compile its own. Their journalists identified thirty-eight jurisdictions that keep records of abuse in long-term care – six provincial ministries and, in four provinces, thirty-four regional health authorities. The next step was to file access-to-information requests with each.

The show had initially sought occurrence reports for each reported incident but government agencies refused to supply this data, citing privacy concerns or sought huge fees. In the end, the program received a mix of statistics and occurrence reports. The next challenge was to analyze the data to produce an estimate of the total resident-on resident incidents in one year. W5 enlisted the help of professor Lynn McDonald and her team of researchers at The University of Toronto’s

Institute for Life Course and Aging.

The documents showed 23, 521 occurrences of all types in one year. In twenty-six of the thirty-eight jurisdictions, the data provided specific information about the type of incident – 6, 494 resident-on-resident clashes. The challenge was to calculate numbers for Quebec, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, and nine health authorities that provided only a total number of incidents.

McDonald’s team estimated that forty-three per cent of all occurrences are resident-on-resident. Applied to the total number of incidents in the twelve jurisdictions for which there was no specific data, this implied a further 3,553 resident-on-resident confrontations, for a total single year estimate of 10, 047, an astounding national number and one never before reported. What is also astounding is that in Ontario, at least, few penalties have been imposed on long-term-care homes that have failed to protect residents from abuse.

Under the province’s Long-Term Care Homes Act, the Ministry of Health has the power to order improvements in a facility and can take over its management or even shut it down. There is no provision for criminal charges in resident-on-resident attacks and, in case after case reviewed by W5, the most that had been done was to require homes in violation of the act to submit a plan promising to do better next time. So families like the Piccolos complain there is no real penalty and no real justice.

The major factor in residents not being protected seems to be the ratio of staff to residents. Many homes claim that the ratio is one staff to eight residents, but personal care workers interviewed by the Star, say that ratio is rarely met. According to Miranda Ferrier, president of The Ontario Personal Support Workers’ Association, “You could be one PSW on a floor of twenty-five, and if two residents start going at it, what can you do?” Ontario’s Long-Term Care Homes Act gives no indication of what the ratio should be.

Lakeside is part of the Extendicare chain that runs 243 senior care centers in North America. Extendicare, which is a for-profit concern, brought in more than \$2 billion in revenues in 2011. The crux of the matter is in those words, ‘for profit’. To employ sufficient staff to control unruly residents would mean a higher bill for wages that would decrease profits. This does not mean that people who run the homes are cold, unfeeling bastards; no, it’s the economic imperative of the system within which they run their business. They have income and expenditures like any other business. If the latter outstrips the former, bankruptcy is the result, meaning the residents will have to look for alternative accommodation and the employees for other jobs and capital will continue its merry way looking for greener pastures.

The most brutal part of it all is that capitalism extracts as much as it can from the workers for about fifty years at the point of production, and retires them when they are no longer considered productive. Even then capitalism extracts what it can by the fees, determined by costs and profit, they pay to nursing homes, but still leaves them unprotected from violence.

How about a society where there is no such thing as profit and where caring for the elderly will be all about their welfare, not profit.

Happy New Year

Economists predicted that there would be 5,000 new jobs in January in Canada, which isn't a lot spread out over the whole country, but at least it would have been an encouraging sign for the unemployed. Recent figures released by Statistics Canada show quite a different picture. Twenty-two thousand lost their jobs in January, mainly in education and manufacturing. The unemployment rate dropped to 7.1% because more people gave up looking for work, the federal agency reported. Canada's labour force shrank by 57,000, the largest decline since April, 1995. Most of the job losses in January were in full-time employment, down 20,600, with part-time work dropping by 1,400.

What is significant is that whereas economists used to speak with optimism, now they realize no one will believe them as the following comments attest.



"We wouldn't be surprised by another decline of roughly 20,000 this month (February), especially given the recently announced layoffs among major retailers", said Capital Economics economist, David Madani, referring to job cuts at Best Buy, Future Shop, and Sears. And how

about this from Doug Porter, deputy chief economist at BMO Capital Markets? "...with housing softening notably and consumers and governments not in much mood (or ability) to spend, the economy will need a major helping hand from a stronger US performance in the year ahead to help generate renewed job gains." Other economists pointed out that exports fell slightly by temporary shutdowns in Canada's auto and energy sectors. When one considers the state of the American economy and how tightly Canada is bound to it, one can hardly expect a boom period here.

Canada's federal and provincial governments attempt to find markets for Canadian products abroad, but with a shrinking world market they are finding it increasingly difficult. It is pointless and pathetic for politicians, economists, businessmen, and the financial sector to run around like chickens with their heads cut off trying to find answers within capitalism, because there are none. Capitalism is a boom-slump economy and right now we are in one of its worst periodic slumps. This roller coaster effect will last as long as capitalism does until, in fact, the majority working class decide it's time to change to a better system. Until then, the working class will be expected to suffer the consequences of each and every slump.

Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of a society as a whole.

Declaration of Principles

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working-class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into an agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeing working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Canada, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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